

## The Economic Impact of Agriculture

The agriculture industry remains one of the most expansive in Ohio's 18<sup>th</sup> District and Congressman Space is intent on keeping it a vibrant part of the economy. The national economic downturn, coupled with a worldwide recession, has threatened the livelihoods of many Ohio farmers. With further investment in this sector, Southeastern and Central Ohio could benefit from all of the economic advantages that come with a thriving agricultural industry.

According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture ([www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)), **OH-18 has one of the largest agriculture producing districts in the state.**

### Key Agricultural Statistics About OH-18

Number of Farm Operators	17,132
Number of Farms	11,276
Land in Farms	1,734,658 acres
Average Size of Farm	154 acres
Irrigated Land	1,966 acres

**Agricultural production in the Ohio's 18<sup>th</sup> Congressional District has a market value of over \$530 million annually** and with additional protections for farmlands, this figure could grow over the next decade. Continuing the fight to protect our productive agricultural lands should be a top priority, as urban and suburban sprawl has continually been a problem for rural agricultural Districts. These lands are critical to prevent soil erosion and protect critical habitats for wildlife populations.

To create more jobs in a weak economy and promote the benefits of agriculture, we must also support **research and education** in the field. Ensuring that agriculture is a profitable enterprise and preparing Ohio youth to become farmers is essential to promoting the industry for future generations. **The average age of a farm owner in 2007 was 55.3 – a number that has gone up in the last three years and continues to rise.** Students who have an interest in agriculture need to know that there are opportunities in the industry. We must help facilitate both those opportunities and students' knowledge of them. **Without adequate tools to ready the next generation of farmers to compete globally, our country – and Ohio's farms – will not be as competitive.**

We must also support efforts encouraging our farmers to utilize new technologies capable of furthering our agricultural practices. Without support for these efforts, small farms in Ohio's 18<sup>th</sup> District will fall behind because they cannot afford to engage in the research themselves.

In short, **protecting the large and small farms**, which are engines of Ohio's 18<sup>th</sup> Congressional District's economy, is a crucial component of RENEW Ohio and an important element in making a long-term investment in Ohio's economic health. To that effect, we must **encourage production** to keep our farms profitable and stimulate job growth in the area. The agriculture industry permeates every facet of our economy, and without federal policies that benefit the agriculture industry, we are in danger of facing further economic decline.